

Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Committee Minutes

April 22, 2004

Natrona County Extension Office, Casper

Members and Technical Advisors present: Frank Galey, Bob Wharff, Bill Williams, John Etchepare, Monte Olsen, Shawn Madden, Kenneth Mills, Terry Cleveland, Joel Bousman, Albert Sommers, Terry Kreeger, Tom Thorne, Jim Logan, Bill Lambert, Scott Werbelow, Rob Hendry, John Hines, Terry Kreeger, Scott Werbelow, Bret Combs, Donal O'Toole, Terry Pollard, Erika Olson, Cathy Purves, David Barber, Dave Roberts, John Keck, Ryan Lance

Dr. Galey opened the meeting by calling for a review of the minutes of the April 8 meeting. He then called attention to the packet of papers including a calendar, letter from the Governor, history of GYIBC, member list, and the agenda for the GYIBC Elk Feed grounds Forum. Tom Thorne indicated that the history of the GYBC that he provided at the April 8 meeting was similar to that he given previously to the U.S. Animal Health Association. Cathy Purves indicated that Merideth Taylor's comment was that the group should give consideration of elk migration corridors, and to eliminate the statement that "it may not be necessary." Terry Pollard stated that he didn't think the elk would stand and starve; they would more likely end up being shot. He also suggested including notes from Dr. Thorne's presentation as an appendix to the minutes. Dr. Galey then called for a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Jim Logan so moved and was seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Dr. Galey went over the Rules of Engagement and asked for discussion. The question arose about whether the minutes could be emailed to the team. Dr. Galey replied that they would be emailed and then after the team's approval of them they would be made public. Cathy Purves wanted to know if the press would be informed of the team's agenda. Ryan Lance replied that he planned to post it to the website and copy it to the members. Dr. Galey added that he would be sure they received it within a reasonable time period, i.e. within 10 days of the next meeting. Mr. Lance asked that members who need to make necessary corrections to their addresses etc., do so on the sign in sheet.

Decision-Making

Dr. Galey made the suggestion that when reaching consensus, these recommendations be assigned to categories, and levels of consensus, expressed in percentages, and then be used to give the Governor an idea of how the team felt about an issue so that the minority point of view would be adequately represented. Albert Sommers requested that the minority be in control of wording the minority report. Dr. Galey pointed out that it would be a work in progress as to wording and that it would be captured in the minutes. He then called for other comments on decision-making. The number of levels and corresponding percentages were then discussed. It was stated that as there were 18 voting members (advisors were not to vote). The group agreed that consensus approaches would be the

ideal way to advance recommendations. If consensus was not possible, three tiers of agreement were recommended. Those tiers would be 1) consensus, 2) super majority, and 3) simple majority. After discussion, it was decided that consensus was unanimous consent among a quorum present in favor of a recommendation. A super majority would constitute 80% of a quorum present in favor of a recommendation. A simple majority would be that over 50% of a quorum was in favor of a recommendation. A percentage of a quorum was preferred to absolute numbers given the understanding that 100% of the members would not be present at a meeting. Rob Hendry moved to adopt this agreement, followed by Bill Lambert as seconde. The motion was carried unanimously.

Dr. Galey asked whether he as Chair should lead the process and not vote, and perhaps stand as a tie-breaker. Senator Hines indicated that the Chair of legislative committees also voted. It was decided that as an appointed member of the committee, the Chair would vote on all matters.

A motion to allow proxies to vote on behalf of absent members failed on an 8 (favor) to 10 (against) vote. Thus, proxies are welcome to present material and discuss issues, but will be asked not to vote on recommendations.

Subcommittee Activities:

Wildlife: Discussion of subcommittee activities led to a question from Terry Cleveland about possibly having a meeting with some of the 31 cattle producers living around the feed grounds when the team meets in Pinedale. After a discussion of funding and logistics, such meetings were encouraged as information sharing opportunities.

Response to a new outbreak of brucellosis in cattle: Jim Logan presented issues identified by his group on how the state might respond to the next outbreak of brucellosis in cattle. More efficient communication is needed among producers, veterinary practitioners and with other states. An information clearing house is needed in order to counteract the rumor mill.

The second issue is surveillance and prevention. Wyoming needs to follow APHIS Brucellosis Uniform methods and rules now, and after regaining its free status. The Wyoming Livestock Board and the Wyoming cattle industry need to establish surveillance testing requirements for short and long term. This will protect trading partners in risk areas; especially in Northwest Wyoming. There is a need to develop a database on the cattle tested from "risk areas." Opportunities to develop certified brucellosis-free herds might also help calm fears of rampant infection. Legislative funding might be requested to address the financial impact of long-term quarantine on herd owners. Dealers and traders should be licensed or registered with the Wyoming Livestock Board and records kept of all livestock transactions. Perhaps seeking legislation requiring the identification of livestock might be appropriate.

The last issue identified by this group involves internal functions of the Wyoming Livestock Board and APHIS. There needs to be timely issuing and enforcement of

quarantines. During the discussion following Dr. Logan's presentation, the issues of compensation for losses, status of herds, registration of sale barns, and surveillance of abortions were identified. Dr. O'Toole suggested that producers have a moral obligation to report abortion problems, therefore placing the responsibility on the individual owners. Albert Sommers reminded the group that abortion is expected at 1 to 2 percent. The cost of testing is high and should be weighed against the need to know the cause. He also indicated the timing of discovery is very important. Bob Wharff said there needed to be a way to encourage and create incentive for identification of abortion causes. Joel Bousman said surveillance may be addressed by having better communication with producers. He reminded everyone that each case is different and the cost varies. He suggested the creation of a review board to determine how cost should be accounted. Shawn Madden said it might be a good idea to make a list of the possible costs producers may incur in getting tested. He also believes any infected herd should be depopulated. Compensation of owners for herd depopulation was then discussed. Albert Sommers indicated that the timing of discovery is very important. A fall outbreak, like the Jensen one, would mean the loss of an entire calf crop before a herd could be repopulated. It would be a good idea to have some group with the power to decide and enforce the decision to depopulate or test out. Bob Wharff said a full work-up may not be necessary, but screening should be done.

Human Health Issues: Dr. Barber received an email from Dr. Musgrave identifying the main issues from that group. Dr. Tracy Murphy will get CDC input. Cathy Purves asked if any human has been identified as having been infected with Brucellosis. Dr. Barber responded that humans may be infected with the disease, but at low numbers. Dr. Galey pointed out that these were Wyoming numbers and not enough is known about the potential risks. Dr. Barber said that Brucellosis is under-reported worldwide. Cathy also wanted to know how those human infections are reported and if related herds are then tested. Dr. Logan said there were two cases reported last year to the Health Department and he checked as to whether livestock testing was needed. Rob Hendry wondered if there were more cases now than in the past. He also wanted to know if the information about the cases is protected. Dr. Barber said the method of transmission could be reported and that he would work to get answers to the other questions.

Cattle issues, inter-species transmission, and surveillance: Rob Hendry is chair of this subcommittee. The six herds under quarantine are being re-tested. If all the tests come back negative, they will be released to grazing. Cathy Purves asked if every individual in the herd was being tested. Dr. Logan explained that only test-eligible cattle would be tested. Dr. Combs indicated they would be testing heifers and bulls to begin with. It was noted that funding is available for testing but not for labor. Monte Olsen wondered who would be financially responsible for testing. Dr. Logan said that the funding is allocated to private practitioners for the blood testing. John Hines wondered if more surveillance will be needed after we obtain our Brucellosis Free status. Dr. Logan said the present surveillance requirements are adequate and that an increase would not be necessary. However, he cautioned the group that Brucellosis Free status would not necessarily reduce the surveillance required by our surrounding trading partners. Shawn Madden discussed the cost to bleed a cow if the livestock board was going to require that all

breeding females to be sold had to be tested. The majority of test-eligible animals for use, other than slaughter, are being bled. We may be testing more than necessary, but we need to be careful in risk areas. Shawn Madden said that once the state has its free status back, the testing should be reduced.

Hale Kreycik expressed his thanks to the group on behalf of the Game and Fish Commission and the Department.

Lunch Break

Erika Olson commented on the issue of compensation.

Issues: Cattle, transmission, and surveillance:

Albert Sommers asked what surveillance program APHIS was going to require after the state regained the Brucellosis Free Status. Bret Combs said surveillance would be less, had we never had our free status, but it might need to be higher due to requirements from our trading partners. Dr. Logan said a team appointed by APHIS to make sure procedures were being carried out correctly requested increased surveillance well before the current outbreak.

Joel Bousman said that in order to satisfy other states, it is important to routinely test at auctions and markets. He thinks mandatory whole-herd testing should be voluntary, but expects excellent participation if funding is available for testing. Benefit is expected from certification of having a Brucellosis free herd. Bill Lambert said that testing should be mandatory and he feels the need to educate the producers in the high risk areas is important.

Tom Thorne wanted to know how “herd certification” would fit with the development program. APHIS has this function available. It requires two negative tests of sexually intact animals 18 months and older; 10-14 months apart; and whole herds already tested could be certified if it is done within that 10-14 month window. Bret Combs said keeping paperwork would be an advantage if certified as it allows for complete accountability in order to maintain Brucellosis free status. Dr. Williams asked if they would need to retest 100% and Bret Combs replied, yes. John Etchepare wondered if states could refuse to accept the APHIS certification. Dr. Logan said that such refusal is not likely. Herd certification would be something, that with state funding, could help the entire state, even if used in the focused area. John Etchepare wondered if there were restrictions on the introduction of cattle from outside the state and Cathy Purves asked what the risks of association with imported cattle would be. Dr. Logan explained that all incoming cattle require testing if they are from a foreign country. Copies of the current draft Uniform Methods and Rules from USDA was requested for all members. Dr. Logan would be leery of only testing bred cows in the risk area. Shawn Madden said there is a substantial amount of cost and effort needed to meet the mandatory requirements. Rob Hendry said that logistically speaking, levels of surveillance need to

be set for sale barns, etc. as to which cattle to test and which cattle not to test. Dr. Logan said that herd certification will diminish the need for continued testing. Rob Hendry said there is a great urgency to get the word out to producers this fall about the required testing. Albert Sommers said testing would be difficult without help from the federal veterinarians because private vets are hard-pressed for time during the fall preg-testing run. Shawn Madden said the best place to do the testing is on the ranch but the logistics of it are driven by economics. Scott Werbelow wondered how high-risk areas would be determined and Rob Hendry said that is one of the topics that need to be discussed in the committee. Tom Thorne said the last outbreak was not as closely tied to a feed ground, so the risk area is bigger than just adjacent to feed grounds. Scott Werbelow said the crucial period is February 10 through mid-June for transmission. Joel Bousman said that one feed ground is on deeded land. Everyone was asked to mail recommendations on issues to Rob Hendry for their discussion at the committee meetings.

Frank Galey indicated that improvement of existing practices and what is already being done right are also legitimate issues for this committee to explore and advocate. Albert Sommers suggested that development of a feed ground management plan and perhaps do a map overlay of those affected ranches would be important steps. Cathy Purves was curious about the turnout times. John Keck said efforts are being made to reduce the amount of co-mingling of cattle and elk. Cathy Purves wondered if it is an issue with cattle that are being turned out at the Grand Teton National Park and wondered if the NPS should be directly involved. Tom Thorne said that Game & Fish has been working with turn-out dates during the high-risk periods, and Erika Olson said they are requiring vaccination in some areas before turn-out dates. Joel Bousman thought the task force should recommend that all feed grounds have individualized management plans. Scott Werbelow said that the elk fence currently in place on private land raises issues about the outbreaks. Dr. Logan asked for some ideas on how they can get the needed information out to the people who are raising those concerns and Dr. Galey felt that a subcommittee meeting with thirty one area ranchers will be a great start. John Hines said those who are not directly affected tend to ignore the information. Rob Hendry thought we could ask the brand inspectors to remind the producers and Frank Galey said the veterinarians could also help to pass the information on. Rob Hendry said that vaccination was mentioned but wondered if there was an issue with that. Terry Pollard said cattlemen may believe that vaccine is 100%, which it isn't, and we need to get information out in that regard. Dr. Mills reminded everyone that years of effort are involved in the development of vaccines. Drs. Logan and Williams agreed that a loophole exists in that not all females are currently vaccinated for brucellosis, but there is some reason for that. Joel Bousman doesn't believe that the task force could make a recommendation on efficacy of vaccinations. Bret Combs said there needs to be a justifiable reason for adult vaccination. Dr. O'Toole wanted to know what risk factors would allow for the adult vaccination. Dr. Combs said it's hard to nail down. Perhaps exposure to an infected herd would allow for it, but the risk involved with that are unknown. Bill Lambert wanted to know what would be the efficacy with adult vaccination. Bret Combs said that you will get some increase in protection but it is not quantifiable. Arnold Gertonson said the vaccine has been used in some high-risk herds in the past. Terry Kreeger said that booster vaccinated adult elk actually did worse. Donal O'Toole said that a testing challenge to vaccinated adult cattle

may not be possible due to new CDC select agent rules. Terry Kreeger said that outdoor challenge tests are currently not allowed and there needs to be a strong statement made that we need to be allowed to do these.

Rob Hendry said that if we are going to develop new or better vaccines we need to have a place to test them. Dr. Galey said we need to make a strong statement that Wyoming is O.K. to work with. Donal O'Toole said it's important that we test outdoors in securely fenced facilities. Dr. Galey asked if anyone had any comments on issues related to minimizing transmission. Cathy Purves stated there had previously been discussion on moving high risk herds.

Dr. Logan discussed the issue of animal identification. He indicated the livestock board's requirement should be reaffirmed. Shawn Madden felt the metal clip in the ear could be used for both purposes. Bret Combs said we would lose traceability with further tags if the numbers are not written down. Joel Bousman asked if, when predators clean up the aborted fetus is it possible to take note of it? Terry Kreeger would like to be able to use a test that would discriminate between vaccine and field strain. Donal O'Toole asked Scott Werbelow if there are little things or big things he can't do because of a lack of funding. Scott did talk about some limitations due to lack of funding such providing for elk fencing. Tom Thorne suggested also fencing of cattle feedlots/lines and Cathy Purves said the method of feeding such as pellets and keeping the food off the ground are other tools. Scott Werbelow said elk need a certain amount of roughage, which is not available in pellets. Albert Sommers thinks habitat enhancement geared toward reduction of co-mingling, getting elk on and off of the feeding lines early, minor movements in the feed grounds, and mapping where the feed grounds have been and where damage and cattle exist on both public and private land will help. Tom Thorne said he thinks tools need to be site-specific. One tool should be feeding off the ground and long feed troughs might work so that all would have access. Limited space will not work, as the bulls would guard the area. He also felt feeding the pellets enhances dispersion. Terry Pollard said we also need to look at controlling the wolf. Kenneth Mills asked if the fetuses were found in the feed or just laid out on the ground. Terry Kreeger said he feels there will be a lot of contact regardless of feed. Two grounds are set up for capture and testing. Rob Hendry wondered if the elk found with brucellosis are marked and would hunters remove those elk. Terry Kreeger said that anything's possible.

Frank Galey asked if there were any other comments before the public comment. Monte Olsen asked if subcommittees could have a group email or conference call. Dr. Galey said they could get a hold of Muff to do that if needed. He reminded the subcommittee chairmen to make sure their committee meetings are made public. He also spoke about the "Wildlife Diseases in Greater Yellowstone" letting everyone know copies are available. He asked that any issues the group identified and then developed be emailed to Rob Hendry. If anyone has an interest in other areas, they too can be brought up.

The group concluded by deciding to request information about mapping and map-related data. Dr. Galey agreed to try to find speakers for the next meeting in May on what is available via mapping and positioning.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Magagna said that, on a localized basis, bringing ranchers and game and fish together, would be very helpful. Also, he suggested that it would help if committee-meeting rooms could be configured so the chairman faces the audience.

Arnold Gertonson had a question on mapping, APHIS, and wondered if there is a place to challenge test vaccines.

Bob Wharff cautioned the group on “Wildlife Diseases” because it is full of misinformation.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm